



TOM TORLAKSON
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A Message from California's Top Homeland Security Advisor & State Superintendent of Public Instruction

No words can adequately express the overwhelming grief that we are all feeling after the horrific tragedy that unfolded at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut this past week. Our hearts are heavy as we think of the innocence of the lives lost and the valiant efforts of teachers, school leaders and public safety professionals to protect them. We are continuing to keep the families and loved ones of those lost in our thoughts and prayers. And, as leaders for California's public instruction and homeland security agencies, we want to reassure everyone in our education community that the safety of our students and staff remains our highest priority.

Regardless of what motivated the shooting in Connecticut, it's important for all of us to take another close look at the safety plans and security procedures we have in place to reduce the risks on our school campuses and in our workplaces. We know that many of you are already working closely with your district leaders, campus safety teams and local law enforcement agencies to ensure we are maintaining the safest learning environments possible. We applaud you for keeping safety a top priority. Through your combined efforts, many of you are exemplary leaders of safety planning and preparedness and have readily shared those best practices with the education community.

We are writing you today to emphasize the importance of taking the time to talk with your staff and leadership about school safety in light of this tragic event. Whether it's a review of your security procedures or special outreach to teachers, parents and staff, any steps you can take now to be prepared for any emergency are extremely important. Some of the most heinous plots to do harm to our schools and communities have been thwarted by the simple actions of alert and prepared individuals.

The California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA) has compiled a range of resources from the federal, state and local level to help you. These are only a starting point to help find what might help you stay on top of the best practices in school safety and preparedness. You can find those resources here: <http://bit.ly/schoolsafe> or on the Cal EMA website at www.calema.ca.gov.

Thank you for your continued dedication to educational excellence and the safety of all California's staff, students and parents.

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California Emergency Management Agency